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AUTHOR Lakes, Richard D.
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ABSTRACT

This paper traces the roots of the new vocationalism to the educational reform movements of the 1980s, with philosophical underpinnings in the work of John Dewey in the early 20th century. It explores other influences, including Marxian critiques of capitalist uses of education and alternative views of education and work presented by followers of Paulo Freire, who saw revolutionary promise in literacy and education. The paper examines significant Deweyan, Marxist, and Freirean themes in the literature on the new vocationalism. It describes the Deweyan scholars' challenge to prevailing assumptions about vocational education and their assertion that educational reform will result in better trained workers who can participate effectively in the workplace and in democracy. The paper reviews Marxian analysis of how schools reproduce social class inequities through curriculum differentiation, which sorts individuals into future occupational roles. It examines the Freireans' use of critical pedagogy to assist working-class people in examining oppression. The paper concludes with a discussion of the themes drawn from the three ideologies that points out theoretical contradictions and/or tensions within them. It suggests research that will guide the future of vocational education. Contains 123 references. (SK)

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The New Vocationalism:

Deweyan, Marxist, and Freirean Themes

Information Series No. 369

Richard D. Lakes

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Deweyan, Marxist, and Freirean Themes

Information Series No. 369

Richard D. Lakes
Georgia State University

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
Center on Education and Training for Employment
College of Education
The Ohio State University
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus Ohio 43210-1090

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Foreword

The Educational Resources Information Center Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC/ACVE) is 1 of 16 clearinghouses in a national information system that is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. This paper was developed to fulfill one of the functions of the clearinghouse—interpreting the literature in the ERIC database. This paper should be of interest to vocational educators, researchers, and students.

ERIC/ACVE would like to thank Richard D. Lakes for his work in preparing this paper. Dr. Lakes is Associate Professor of Educational Policy Studies at Georgia State University, where he has taught courses in politics and education, gender issues, and the history and philosophy of vocational education, among others. He is the author of ***Youth Development and Critical Education*** and the editor of ***Critical Education for Work.***

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Darrell L. Parks
Director
Center on Education and
Training for Employment

Executive Summary

The new vocationalism has moved away from the image of trade-specific training toward a focus on higher standards for basic skills in the workplace. The roots of the new vocationalism may be found in the educational reform movements of the 1980s, with philosophical underpinnings in the work of John Dewey in the early 20th century. At the same time, Marxian critiques of capitalist uses of education and followers of Paulo Freire, who saw revolutionary promise in literacy and education, presented alternative views of education and work.

This paper examines significant Deweyan, Marxist, and Freirean themes in the literature on the new vocationalism. It describes the Deweyan scholars' challenge to prevailing assumptions about vocational education and their assertion that vocational education reform will result in better trained workers who can participate effectively in the workplace and in democracy.

The paper reviews Marxian analysis of how schools reproduce social class inequities through curriculum differentiation, which sorts individuals into future occupational roles. The Marxists demonstrate that the resistance of marginalized students is tempered by the lack of meaningful waged labor in the deindustrialized world of advanced capitalism. Building on Marxian scholarship, the Freireans use critical pedagogy to assist working-class people in examining oppression. They see the new vocationalism as a place where students can engage in critical dialogue about work, occupations, and power; and they offer hope through empowerment.

The paper concludes with a discussion of the themes drawn from the three ideologies that points out theoretical contradictions and/or tensions within them. It suggests research that will guide the future of vocational education.

Information on topics discussed in this paper may be found in the ERIC database using the following descriptors—*Education Work Relationship, Educational Change, Educational Philosophy, *Marxian Analysis, *Social Class, Role of Education, *Vocational Education—and identifiers—*Dewey (John), *Freire (Paulo), Vocationalism. Asterisks denote particularly relevant terms.

Introduction

Contemporary vocational education offerings in high schools have shed the image of trade-specific training while downplaying the tracking function. The new vocationalism has greater sustainability because business, education, civic, and governmental leaders are focusing upon heightened standards and assessments for basic skills in the work world. Today's employers want to improve the skills of their labor force at taxpayer's expense. Public education seems to be more identified with the workplace, with particular attention paid to those noncollege-bound students who will assume positions in postindustrial firms. These individuals need reading, writing, computation, and communication skills as a foundation for the new styles of learning in high performance workplaces. Problem solving and critical thinking tasks, now grouped among a constellation of competencies known as workplace know-how, have been codified and legitimized by a number of high-powered commissions, including the panel created by the National Center on Education and the Economy, titled the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce (1990) and the U.S. Department of Labor's Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, known as SCANS (1992). Their recommendations for facilitating school-to-work transitions, among other findings, have influenced vocational curriculum development to date.

Interestingly, in the early 1980s vocational education's comfortable niche in the delivery of job training within public education began to erode. At that time a spate of books decried curricular differentiation and tracking in U.S. secondary education (see Boyer 1983, Goodlad 1984, and Sizer 1984). Powell, Farrar, and Cohen (1985) likened the modern high school to an extensive shopping mall with any number of speciality shops offered for "preferred customers"—certain groups of high- and low-track students who could avail themselves of a wide range of electives, accelerated academic offerings, or work-related programs. With the publication of ***A Nation at Risk*** (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983), education was publicly shamed as mediocre, in dire need of reform. This message was buttressed by the nation's economic urgency in preparation for global markets under advanced capitalism. In those years, some conservative critics charged, vocationalism in education would have to change or wither away (Shor 1986). Mortimer Adler's ***Paideia Proposal*** (1982), for instance, was one attempt to

scuttle secondary-level vocational education altogether and restore a common-core curriculum in the humanities. Most reformers articulated less draconian measures; they simply wanted a curriculum tied to higher-order cognitive skills development or lessons on moral training and character education (Spring 1989).

Evidently the new vocationalism was recognized as early as 1984 with publication of ***The Unfinished Agenda*** by the community of vocational education policymakers affiliated with the National Center for Research in Vocational Education at the Ohio State University. Authored by the National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education (NCSVE), this report anticipated the contemporary integrationists' claim that learning could be a blend of liberal and vocational studies for *all* students. The report advised curricular balance, acknowledged student differences, and accepted outcomes tempered by standards of excellence and equity. The purposes of public education in high schools were multivaried and layered, the authors asserted; "It is not an either/or situation" (NCSVE 1984, p. 3). Perhaps this widely disseminated report became the template for a new era of tolerance among progressive-thinking vocationalists. Certainly the celebration of student diversity contained within its pages earned the respect of such scholars as Pratzner (1985) and Lewis (1991) who spoke of a significant paradigm change in the field with philosophical underpinnings credited to John Dewey.

Additionally, the roots of the new vocationalism can be traced back to revisionist theorists who promulgated a Marxian interpretation of capitalist schools (Apple 1982; Bowles and Gintis 1976; Liston 1988). Their critique of vocationalism centered upon marginalization of the working classes through public education. It was assumed that students would be handicapped by a low-track assignment with limited economic advancements. Thus, vocational education was condemned as leading to dead-end occupations, providing the ruling class with a steady stream of industrial drones. More important, some Marxists maintained that schools were multiple sites of class stratification; therefore, identity development could be viewed as a cultural and psychological process whereby youths would create meaning through schooling, using peer groups in ways that resisted and contested status differences (Aronowitz and Giroux 1985; Giroux 1988).

Enter the Freireans. They grafted their socialistic claims of revolutionary promise and possibility through literacy and education onto the Marxist notions of agency, affiliation, and

solidarity. Some Freireans viewed the new vocationalism as a contested site where working-class students could be provided limited opportunities to critique the social order and puzzle out its more democratic and humanitarian consequences (Kincheloe 1995; Lakes 1994a, 1994b).

My purpose in this monograph is to illuminate the significant Deweyan, Marxist, and Freirean themes embedded within the literature on and about the new vocationalism. First, I examine the contemporary scholarship by Deweyans who desire a curriculum integration that challenges prevailing traditional assumptions of occupational study. Prompted in part by recent liberalizations in postindustrial workplaces, these scholars contend that revisions to vocational curricula might strengthen democratic values and human possibilities. Second, I detail Marxian scholarship linking business imperatives with school-based tracking because these studies of the identity formation of noncollege-bound youth have informed the writings of contemporary Freireans, particularly those who suggest that working-class students can become aware of their oppressions through a critical pedagogy. Third, I explore the genre of scholarship by Freirean theorists who envision a critical education for work, informed by notions of empowerment and hope along class, racial, and gender lines. Fourth, I present a discussion about each of the three theoretical positions within the new vocationalism, pointing out potential contradictions, criticisms, and tensions among these ideological camps and offering several suggestions for further research in this area.

The Deweyans

Scholars of the new vocationalism often turn to the philosopher John Dewey when explaining the inspiration and driving force behind this latest educational innovation. Grubb (1995a, 1995b, 1996) suggested that Dewey attempted to overcome dualisms in his epistemology, including, for instance, one that placed the occupations at the center of the curriculum but only as a point of departure for integrated theoretical and applied learning. Perhaps Dewey used the terminology of "education *through* occupations" not "education *for* occupations," Grubb charged, because he wanted the public to recognize that job-specific training was mean and illiberal (1995a, p. 4).

Dewey introduced the occupations into the classroom as a way for students to learn the skills and values of community living (Lakes 1985). The school would become a place where pupils could experiment with the conditions that led to industrial life. The child could use the vast resources of the city; the city and school would be inextricably bound in the educational process. The presence of occupations in the curriculum could generate sympathy for the various industrial pursuits as well. It would provide an intellectual understanding and passionate appreciation of labor. A pedagogy of occupations, then, could unify society through shared interests and experiences—a community- building process leading toward genuine industrial democracy. Unfortunately, 20th-century educators increasingly misunderstood Dewey and separated occupational studies from academic subjects (mostly through school-based tracking). By combining manual and mental, theoretical and practical, academic and vocational, the new vocationalists promote a return to the ideals of Dewey, a reform movement that elevates the role of work in the lives of all school-aged children and youth.

“The new vocationalists promote a return to the ideals of Dewey, a reform movement that elevates the role of work in the lives of all school-aged children and youth.”

Although there have been a number of reform initiatives in vocational education throughout the century (such as career education), according to Grubb (1995b), today's movement is buttressed by four powerful interest groups who gave their support to advocacy and change:

- *Business leaders* wanting public education to prepare entry-level employees in reading, writing, computation, and communication skills;

- *Cognitive scientists* arguing that schools fail to contextualize learning through group activities in real-life, practical situations;
- *Educational researchers* highlighting the potential contributions of vocational education in applied projects;
- *Policymakers* who have strengthened the school-to-work transition through enactment of the Carl D. Perkins Act.

It was the Perkins Act after all that mandated the integration of vocational and academic education and provided the resources to carry out this task.

Still, there are a number of "unresolved issues" within the movement, Grubb (1995b, p. 22) noted, primarily because the implementation phase covers so much ground. Curriculum integration could mean detracking and more heterogeneous classes in high schools. On the other hand, the integration efforts of vocational educators may reside singularly in strengthening the academic side of their occupational offerings. Others more interested in structural changes in secondary education may use the curriculum integration approach in order to create new occupational offerings, such as through career academies and magnet schools. Finally, the new vocationalism for some advocates has meant a revision of pedagogy or teaching methods more closely allied with constructivist learning.

Consider the following pedagogical approach at the Rindge School of Technical Arts in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where ninth-grade, inner-city students engage in an alternative vocational education devoted to sustainable community economic development (Lakes 1997). The occupational program, termed "CityWorks," offers studies in the architecture, public affairs, and city planning of Cambridge through hands-on technical training in the urban community. Rindge students are grouped into small work crews with a vocational teacher who assists them in field-based projects, such as "walking around the block" (a 3-week project in the beginning of the academic year), in order to compile an inventory of neighborhoods, residents, and industries surrounding the high school. On the streets students conduct interviews with pedestrians and storekeepers, gathering information about their relationships to the community's residential settings and workplace sites. The students take a closer look at important physical and natural features, such as the locations of buildings, park benches, mailboxes, street signs, trees and plantings, and noted social features, such as local hangouts and graffiti markings. They even note the common

street sounds heard on the block. In the shops students apply their field experiences to the technical arts in order to showcase their talents through "studio presentation boards." The vocational shops are laboratories where the students fabricate their boards using original artwork and lettering, computer graphics and photos, while integrating scientific concepts and math principles as well as measurement exercises and communications skills into their designs. Advanced curricular activities in this program require skills in map making, blueprint preparation, and architectural drawing. In one year alone, for instance, the students designed and built scale models for a future museum, interviewed a founder of a chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People about his organizing efforts to create a nearby pocket park, and developed a pamphlet highlighting routes to eight of the city's best pastry shops.

In the last project of the academic year, "Community Development," students create businesses and services to be located in Cambridge based upon their needs assessments of the community. Project assignments have included opening a restaurant, creating an autobody shop, and designing a teen center. Each student team prepares a site plan for their community development project, paying special attention to local zoning and building codes, density factors, and parking regulations, among others. They complete a "report card" evaluating the site location for reasonable rents, closeness to public transportation, accessibility to parks, safety and convenience for customers, and availability of parking. They execute a business plan, create scale models of the facility, and produce working drawings of the building. Upon project completion, CityWorks students host an open house to give parents and community members a chance to view and critique the projects. By exploring "the strengths and weaknesses of the indigenous economy," Rindge School executive director Rosenstock (1991, p. 436) contended, his students gain insight into "the unmet needs and underutilized resources" that drive community economic development.

Proponents of this brand of new vocationalism, such as Wirth (1992), enthusiastically support the efforts at Rindge because the approach "involves students in constructivist learning in which they collect data on a part of the community and its needs and then pose their own ideas for solution. They communicate the findings through multimedia presentations and other means

. . . and demonstrate that the teaching of symbolic-analytic skills, attitudes, and values is possible" (p. 204). Others view work-based learning as a way to strengthen urban vocational education (Grubb 1995c; Ramsey 1995) as well as heighten employer involvement in school-to-work transition programs (Bailey 1995; Hamilton 1990; McKernan 1994).

Today's vocational educators triumph Deweyan industrial democracy through a progressivism grounded in holistic, situated, and experiential studies. Embedded within their platform is the notion of good work, an idea that work can be reshaped by individuals empowered in humanistic and imaginative ways to overturn the fragmentation of labor that occurred under Tayloristic production techniques (Bjorkquist 1991; Fitzgerald 1993; Gregson 1993, 1996; Lewis 1990; Rehm 1989). Job redesign in postindustrial America reflects changing beliefs and confidences about workers' abilities to self-direct and manage the laboring process at the point of production. The social organization of front-line workers in autonomous teams is a template for new kinds of work-based learning, illuminating open access to lines of communication and expansive types of knowledge for experimentation and innovation (Marsick 1987; Sirianni 1987; Zuboff 1988). The Deweyans generally agree that the current educational reform movement will result in better trained workers so that the laboring classes may participate effectively and efficiently in employee participation programs that require a high rate of active and creative involvement.

The Marxists

Beginning in the 1970s a group of radical scholars began writing accounts of early 20th-century history suggesting that schooling youths for industry through vocational curricula perpetuated sociocultural inequities as well as limited mobility for children of the U.S. working classes (Bowles and Gintis 1976; Kantor 1988; Kantor and Tyack 1982; Lazerson and Grubb 1974; Spring 1972; Violas 1978). School-based curricular tracking, they argued, acts as a social-sorting mechanism for the labor market. Schools place youths in various tracks depending upon the class-bound origins of their parents. Working-class youths situated in lower-track curricula are provided with vocational-technical training and prepared for waged-labor jobs. Thus, the next generation of working classes are readied for lifetimes of employment in blue- and pink-collar industrial sectors as "hewers of wood and drawers of water."

Certainly the revisionist historical scholarship strongly implied that capitalists and educationists alike purposely looked to the schools for indoctrination of students destined for shop-floor life. In other words, business leaders preoccupied with the need for a tractable and disciplined labor force used vocational education to ready students for jobs in industry. There was a strict correspondence between class and educational track assignments, the scholars argued, which maintained social class differences and societal stratification.

Kantor (1988) reflected the common wisdom among Marxist critics who argued that various constituencies looked to schooling as a way to solve social and economic problems related to the work world, such as labor unrest, sagging industrial productivity, high labor turnover, decline of apprentices, etc. Manufacturing required less shop-floor skill among factory operatives, he suggested, who instead became deskilled machine tenders in scientifically managed production plants. The rationalization of work resulted in a managerial assault upon the formerly autonomous domain of workers. By transforming artisans into deskilled wage earners, and manipulating the terms of their employment, capitalists seized shop-floor control over unionists. Although industrial workers by and large protested top-down managerial imperatives, Kantor related, they were ineffective in turning back the onslaught of new administrative practices.

Perhaps Violas (1978) was the first to link the Marxist deskilling argument, featured in ***Labor and Monopoly Capital*** by Braverman (1974), with social reproduction in vocational education. Trade training, he argued, accommodated a new type of student who could readily adjust to the modern demands of industry. "The labor force now required workers with habits, values, and personality patterns conducive to assembly line techniques," he offered. "The rationale for vocational education maintained that such learning would develop in the future industrial worker psychic structures that would increase his productivity and diminish his alienation" (Violas 1978, p. 125).

Some of the earliest Marxian theorists initially used this reproduction thesis in their analysis of inequality in vocational schooling. For example, in her study of a business education department, Gaskell (1992) found that teachers "reproduce class and gender relations" (p. 92) through cognitive and psychomotor skills training for entry-level employability in clerical occupations, mostly as female secretaries to male bosses. Teachers constructed their course of study around the assigned vocational tasks related to secretarial work; the classroom-as-laboratory was organized as an artificial office setting. Job rotation occurred as well: "Students take turns being 'office managers,' a job which includes marking other students' work, collecting and filing the work, and even clearing the garbage out of the desks." "The entire enterprise," Gaskell (1992) continued, "is based on the notion that there are correct procedures that students must learn" (p. 97).

Valli (1986) articulated a Marxian reproduction thesis of class and gender as well in her ethnographic study of a cooperative education class in office occupations at Woodward, one of four high schools in a small midwestern city. The working-class females preparing for feminized professions in clerical fields subscribed to the culture of romance and denied their aspirations as wage laborers. In other words, according to Valli (p. 182), they ranked "a subordinate work identity" secondary to their sex-typed domestic futures—what she termed the "gender code" in identity formation. In this study the girls' identity formation corresponds strictly to their labor market destinies. These working-class girls were enrolled in clerical training, according to Valli (p. 35), because of learned notions of a "traditional sexual division of labor pattern" exhibited by their mothers and older sisters who worked in feminized fields. Additionally, the cultivation of feminine self-presentation often depicted by their teacher as sexual displays between secretary and male boss was legitimized in the classroom as gender politics in the workplace.

Valli concluded (1986): "The kind of training the students received for office work served to further marginalize their work identities since this identity was presented as secondary to or synonymous with a sexual/home/family identity" (p. 180).

What about resisters? Another group of Marxian studies features analysis of identity formation among marginalized youths that suggests students indeed have agency and act upon their oppressions (see Lakes and Bettis 1995). In other words, working-class adolescents create a counter-school culture in opposition to whatever success ethic and achievement ideology is promoted by teachers and the curriculum. What this means is that sometimes youths who are deeply alienated by the system deem it is in their best interest to reject entirely the status culture of dominant society. For example, in his pathbreaking ethnographic study of adolescent males in transition from school to work, Willis (1977) illuminated how youths construct oppositional social identities within the working classes.

Willis followed several peer groups at a number of schools in Hammertown, an industrial village in the center of England, and examined the variety of ritualistic expressions among this peer group. He found their actions at school to be tightly choreographed: antagonistic, nonconformist, vulgar and obscene, sexist and racist, violent and antisocial. Perhaps the resisters greatest enmity, however, lies with the "ear'oles," conformist male youths who believe in learning and the potential social and economic benefits of academic achievement. Willis (1977, p. 52) suggested that counter-school culture "has many profound similarities" to the larger pattern of working-class life. That is, work culture on the industrial shop floor is gritty and chauvinistic, where toughness and personal strength are manifested daily through manual labor. The shop floor is also symbolic of a physical space where expressive masculine nonconformity is rewarded. For instance, working-class adult males esteem practical, experiential activity over theoretical, bookish knowledge. Here working-class adolescents reproduce the value of anti-intellectualism through their experiences with manual labor, thereby recasting their self-worth accordingly. Thus, Willis (1977) noted: "The rejection of school work by 'the lads' and the omnipresent feeling that they know better is also paralleled by a massive feeling on the shop floor, and in the working class generally, that practice is more important than theory" (p. 56). He suggested that there are contradictions embedded in the counter-hegemonic process of male working-class identity formation. Although the lads have manufactured social identities as resisters,

their potentially emancipatory understandings of primarily class but also gender-bound oppressions are "limited, distorted, and turned back on themselves, often unintentionally" (Willis 1977, p. 3).

Griffin (1985) offered a Marxist-feminist counterpart to Willis' critical ethnography of white, working-class male adolescents. Her study, which traces the experiences of a group of young, white working-class women from leaving school in 1979 to their first 2 years in the labor market, found a clear relationship between gender-specific school curricula and sex-segregated labor markets (the girls study domestic science, cookery, needlework, childcare, typing, and commerce). The students' gendered experiences in school, Griffin (1985, p. 79) argued, "shaped their expectations" in regards to occupational aspirations and future careers. Most of the girls interviewed in the last year of school expected to enter traditional female occupations; although poorly paid and of low status, these jobs were socially organized to accommodate peer friendships—a homosociality that was agreeable to the girls until they shifted their attention to finding a boyfriend. Thus, the gendered constructions of feminine identity (e.g., an ideology of romance), Griffin argued, modified each young woman's career pathways through dating, marriage, and motherhood. She suggested that girls' heterosexual identity formation was a primary motive in their transition from school to work. Occupational objectives such as job satisfaction were secondary characteristics, in her view, to finding a mate. That is, what she termed "an ideology of romance" is a developmental pathway toward adulthood—one that leads directly to marriage and motherhood (and self-exile from the labor force).

MacLeod (1987) explored a critical ethnography of 15 teenage boys in a low-income housing project in the United States that resembled Willis' study of cultural production in Britain. In Clarendon Heights, the site of this research, MacLeod examined the attitudes of two peer groups: the first, mostly white "Hallway Hangers," is noted for a pessimistic outlook on social mobility; whereas the second, the "Brothers," almost exclusively black, speak of an optimistic future. The occupational aspirations of each group are mitigated by poverty and the lower class- and race-bound promises to unemployed adolescent males in urban America. The reason for this apparently counterintuitive finding, according to MacLeod, is that black teens like the Brothers posed a perceived economic threat due to affirmative action sanctions in the labor market, fueling the racial prejudices of the white Hallway Hangers.

For the white boys, MacLeod wrote (1987), the ethnographic evidence suggested that a pessimistic job future "weighs very heavily on the Hallway Hangers; they believe their preferences will have almost no bearing on the work they actually will do" (p. 61). The teenagers thought that unskilled manual work was boring, undifferentiated, and unrewarding—perceptions mostly based upon (1) associations with housing project residents on public assistance, (2) prior experiences in youth labor markets, or (3) contact with family members who held low-waged, unstable jobs. By contrast, the black boys, "although unsure of their occupational aspirations . . . have not resigned themselves to taking whatever [job] they can get" (p. 74). These youths by and large thought that personal inadequacies—not racism—were responsible for one's lack of labor market success. They affirmed the equality of social mobility under a meritocratic society. Unlike the Brothers who, MacLeod (1987, p. 96) claimed, were "fully integrated into high school," the Hallway Hangers rejected the educational demands of schools and teachers—most have dropped out. In other words, they were the resisters—just like Willis' lads sowing the seeds of their own demise. The Brothers, on the other hand, viewed a meritocracy of equal opportunity in their acceptance of schooling as the-way-up-and-out-of-the-ghetto. These black males thought that schooling provided the cultural capital in which to advance one's economic position through academic achievement. Interestingly, the Hallway Hangers have appropriated a counterhegemonic discourse that affirms their masculine street identities. These youth now become resisters, MacLeod (1987) argued, because schooling is seen as "an institution that denies and violates their cultural identities" (p. 107).

“In Marxian studies social class is a level of critical analysis that reveals how, through curriculum differentiation, individuals are sorted and selected in anticipation of their future occupational roles.”

In Marxian studies social class is a level of critical analysis that reveals how, through curriculum differentiation, individuals are sorted and selected in anticipation of their future occupational roles. More important, this scholarship demonstrates that marginalized students do consciously act upon and resist the impositions of oppressive curricula and elite schooling patterns. Marxists privilege collective acts of defiance and struggle against a dominant culture and political economy that has consistently exploited and devalued the working classes. The militancy of student resisters is consciously created and unified through oppositional acts arising from within the hegemony of school's social organization. Without the promise of meaningful waged labor in the transition from school to work, however, investigations into the sociocultural and psychological experiences that comprise identity formations of adolescents—and the notion of student

resistance—must be reanalyzed within the context of corporate deindustrialization and economic disincentives under advanced capitalism (Weis 1990; Wexler 1992).

The Freireans

Freirean writers fashion a pedagogy along the lines of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, linking participants, young and old alike, in consciousness-raising, empowering, and affirming approaches to furthering economic and industrial democracy. Freirean political knowledge and understandings are used by radical scholars to promote dialogue that enables students to demystify and unpack or analyze layers of oppression facing them in schools and society. Having a voice, according to Freire (1985), meant breaking the bonds that ensnare students in their own cultural silences. Vocational classrooms can become organized settings where students participate critically in liberatory practices that deconstruct cultural messages surrounding class-based identities. Vocational curricula could be broadened with multidisciplinary approaches, the Freireans claim, in order to usher forth a critical citizenship that offers a vision of radical democracy (see Lakes 1994a).

Obviously, the curriculum must deliver political, not just technical, subject matter readying individuals for collective actions based upon sound principles of movement organizing and coalition building. Vocational classrooms are appropriate places for emancipatory studies contributing to social movement activism whereby teens and young adults begin to ally themselves with laborist, feminist, and community organizers for a variety of projects advancing workers' rights and economic justice. Successful community building depends upon new and emerging leaders, young and old, who are schooled in a cultural politics that brings them into coalitions with participants engaged in social change.

“Vocational classrooms can become organized settings where students participate critically in liberatory practices that deconstruct cultural messages surrounding class-based identities.”

The Freirean pedagogy just noted is firmly lodged in the history of social movement activism in the United States. At the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, for example, founder Myles Horton infused a hybridization of important ideas on democracy and education from a wide series of events and thinkers in his day: pragmatism in the writings of John Dewey and William James; social reforms enacted at various big-city settlement houses; experiential teachings at the Danish Folk Schools; real-life, problem-solving activities by his native Southern Appalachians; and social justice ministering from his Christian upbringing (Adams 1975). Horton was committed to helping the working classes examine their sociocultural oppressions (Horton and Freire 1990).

Of course, his is not the sole voice articulating a critical pedagogy of empowerment and activism in which public actors are encouraged to gain knowledge about their local struggles—and themselves—in order to partake of progressive social movements that build healthy communities and workplaces. Alinsky (1971) desired a critical education for community activists and organizers predicated upon their understandings of power analysis, including studies of organizational problems, conflict tactics, communication methods, and leadership methodologies. Successful community building, in his view, depended upon new and emerging leaders (young and old) schooled in a critical education that brought them into coalitions with participants engaged in shaping democratic praxis from the bottom up.

Radical scholars such as Shor (1987, 1988) have carefully described the Freirean process of critical consciousness-raising requiring group analysis of problem-posing in creating, designing, and implementing alternative strategies for development. In a critical pedagogy of work, he charged, learners were converted in social consciousness from the apathy of mass culture to a liberatory culture. Emancipatory learning, Shor (1987) implied, awakened students to the social purpose of education. In other words, working-class students could be exposed to educational projects illuminating power relationships on the shop floor. Freirean teachers may assist students in the production of meanings that are liberatory critiques of the industrial order in addition to building an oppositional pedagogy grounded upon justice and equity.

Freireans affirm teachers as critical pedagogues who begin to demystify various features of work culture and deconstruct the dominant ideologies of capitalist production (see Gregson 1994b; Lakes 1991, 1992; Simon and Dippo 1987). Cultural struggles are illuminated so that learners study labor's relationship to industrial distribution and production and examine the conditions of working-class oppressions that are embedded in political economy. A Freirean educational project consists of unmasking existing teaching practices that obstruct freedom in the classroom.

Building a strong labor movement appears to be the major theme that has echoed throughout this genre of radical scholarship. What should teachers say to students about labor history, labor laws, collective bargaining, labor-management relations, labor union activities and membership, the union label, occupational health and safety, and industrial democracy? "Organizing for

workers' rights is a political act," Hershbach (1994) claimed, "and the purpose of instruction is to expose students to all of its manifestations in order to empower them to successfully chart their own working lives" (p. 90). Simply put, a critical pedagogy for work provides youths and young adults the opportunity to assess the advantages and/or disadvantages of union membership, a strategy that helps them realize democratic labor practices for economic and social action. Technical skills training is important, he emphasized, but individuals define and transform their working lives through social means. "They need to learn how to cope with the uncertainties of the marketplace," Herschbach (1994) continued; "they also need to learn how to participate positively in the reconstruction of a democratic workplace which fosters not only goals of efficiency, but of individual growth, personal fulfillment, and collective action" (p. 86).

The Marxists maintain that changing workplace conditions under advanced capitalism necessitate the revitalization of labor strength, specifically because more individuals enter labor markets today that are dictated by global industrial policies deemed inconsiderate of employees' health and welfare (Samper and Lakes 1994). There are enormous tensions in the technocratic-capitalistic paradigm of workplace organization. For example, Noble (1990) suggested workplace high-tech skills have no relationship to either worker empowerment or intellectual enhancement. Rather, this latest corporate assault on workers is "an ideological 'retooling' of the U.S. working class, aimed to bring workers merely 'up to speed' as compliant, adaptable, 'information processors'" (Noble 1990). In other words, technocratic imperatives may actually heighten adversarialism in the workplace: high-tech information systems such as electronic eavesdropping and computerized surveillance have replaced older forms of managerial control. Howard (1985) feared a brave new workplace where the corporation becomes the defining social reality, manufacturing the postindustrial "promise of a world where traditional dissatisfactions dissolve in an atmosphere of unity and good feeling, where conflict and division are abolished, and where the ambivalences of modern industrial life disappear behind the glittering facade of a utopian business culture" (p. 7). And Fischer (1990) eloquently warned of a quiet revolution: the rapid growth of technocratic power and influence in U.S. organizations is engendered by a monolithic partnership of the state and the economy.

Unlike the Marxists, the Freireans offer an upbeat, optimistic, and hopeful message of societal transformation through civic action. Students can be linked into coalitions of activists who learn how to challenge privileged myths, hegemonic narratives, and monocultural practices derived from a social totality devoted to domination over nature and control over people. Progressive social movements, Apple (1993) argued, "enhance democracy at the grass roots, empowering individuals who had heretofore been largely silenced, creating new ways of linking people outside and inside the schools together so that schooling is not seen as an alien institution but something that is integrally linked to the political, cultural, and economic experiences of people in their daily lives" (pp. 40-41).

Simon, Dippo, and Schenke (1991) offered a book-length study of empowering educational techniques that highlighted the importance of teaching workers' rights to vocational-technical students. For example, the authors suggested that cooperative education students need to know how to conduct themselves while engaged in potentially hazardous work. These same individuals, they argued, must become aware of their rights to be informed about the dangerous conditions of their labor—and to take collective action against employers to improve the situation as well. Of note is how the authors deconstructed for the readers an understanding of capitalist work organization and managerial control, as well as the myriad consequences of employee pressures to ignore or downplay safety conditions under heightened production demands. Some people may get hurt, they offered, because piecework systems and bonuses contribute to employee speed-ups on the shop floor. At the crux of this problem is the basic structure of an exchange relationship with labor that continually attempts to minimize costs in the manufacturing process, including additional expenses to safeguard employees' health and welfare. Critical questioning here raises important considerations about right-to-know health effects of industrial chemicals, for instance, and technical information about toxic practices that are used in the workplace.

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Power analysis is the key to a critical unmasking of health and safety issues (Simon, Dippo, and Schenke 1991) because students must be taught who in the workplace identifies the problem and what decisions are made to rectify or ignore the conditions. This is what they meant by initially naming the condition: "The fact that the naming of a health and safety problem is a human decision implies that there may be disagreement over how and when such decisions are made. In our view, it is important for students to

understand how and why such disagreements may arise and what may be done to resolve such disputes" (p. 96). The authors then provided four chapter themes that organized the material at hand: (1) how health and safety problems are defined; (2) who assigns responsibility for solving the problem; (3) how the social context of labor affects safe working conditions; and (4) how collective action can resolve a dispute. Each theme is supported by one or two classroom activities along with a dozen notes to the teacher clarifying the lesson plans, which range from conducting a workplace audit to performing a role-playing exercise. In the latter activity the authors asked the class to generate a list drawn from personal experiences when hazardous conditions may at times verge upon potential work refusal. For each situation enacted in small groups (the authors instructed in their teaching notes), students should include at least four players: a worker, a supervisor, a worker's representative, and an inspector. Finally, after the exercise, a follow-up class discussion could be prompted by asking the students if refusing to work is indeed a viable option for regular employees at their co-op work sites.

Freirean scholars insist that teachers use generative theme development that helps students to name their oppressions, connecting the sources of injustice in their lives to workplace situations. For example, in an automotive technology classroom composed of working-class students, Gregson (1994a) described a critical education project that began when the vocational teacher discovered many of the students' parents were displaced from their employment at nearby factories due to recessionary times in the automotive industry. The instructor seized the opportunity to begin a problem-posing assignment linking current deindustrialization policies, the work ethic, U.S. manufacturing decline, and the global marketplace. The students surfaced a number of generative themes initially by conducting historical research on the notion of scientific management in Tayloristic production techniques. Then, through a number of interviews with their relatives, plant employees, and corporate managers, the class began to "critically analyze the industrial structure and power relationships within it" (1994a, p. 171). Gregson also related that the students even made theoretical connections about reproduction in public education: how curricular tracking was designed with elements of social inequity in mind.

Generative theme building is a Freirean pedagogical device useful where students are employed either full or part time (Auerbach and Wallerstein 1987). Samper and Lakes (1994) observed a

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workplace literacy program, for instance, that provided young adult immigrants, rank-and-file unionists in the garment trades, a way to examine the social reality of their lives through vocabulary exercises simply naming the obstacles to full acceptance in public life. The teacher was able to elicit from the class a list of generative words drawn from the actual experiences of these students that helped them name the sources of injustice in their lives. By using the vocabulary of students' subjectivities to break silences, the adept Freirean instructor could then build a host of generative themes to advance reading and writing skills, furthering critical inquiry and understanding in this particular community of learners.

Students in preparation for occupations can critically engage in dialogue as well, particularly as it relates to their future occupational identity through an analysis of media images and popular cultural messages. Gregson (1994a) observed a health occupations teacher using a videotaped replay of a television soap opera to elicit discussion on current health care issues, specifically about myths associated with homosexuality and the contraction of the HIV virus. After an extensive study of sexually transmitted diseases, the class conducted a peer-led school assembly on AIDS. By creating new learning opportunities in vocational education, the teacher assisted a group of future health care workers in investigating homophobia and discrimination surrounding AIDS treatment and prevention.

A cosmetology instructor using a similar Freirean theme-building approach led an analysis of the beauty myth by asking her students to create a poster of sex symbols depicted in popular magazines, then interrogated them on why Aryan features were prominent in their project (ibid.). Of particular importance here is the way this black teacher helped her students (mostly African American) to peel away the layers of sexism and racism that informed their judgments of attractiveness in U.S. society. When the instructor pointed out that this was a problem "because she and some of them could never be considered beautiful," Gregson (1994a) wrote, "the students were surprised and interested" (p. 175). The teacher then asked her students to analyze how advertisements for cosmetology products maintained white racial privilege through hair color and style and to identity possible factors contributing to an ethnocentric perception of beauty in dominant culture. Finally, the students were prompted to create a plan of action that would assist them in changing public perceptions of multicultural attractiveness, including new poster displays showing diversity among models and more ethnic mannequins for the laboratory.

Perhaps these examples of Freirean learning are equated with the metaphor of activism, according to Rehm (1994), who believed that critical teachings could usher forth a radical agenda for vocational schools. That is, when constructing an antiracist and antisexist pedagogy in Freirean classrooms, teachers ask students who are preparing for work to examine their lives in relationship to what they desire workplaces to become. Another way of saying this, Rehm (1994) clarified, is that "by viewing vocational students as activists, teachers would encourage them to reflect on their own histories and insert themselves as active agents into the work of cultural production. Part of the power of the metaphor is that activism highlights the struggle and tension inherent in working toward a vision" (p. 156).

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For Freireans the new vocationalism offers a place where students actively engage in critical dialogues with their peers and teachers about work and occupations (Simon 1983). Of particular importance are instructional practices whereby students gain an understanding of power and dominance in society. The genre of radical scholarship presented in this section speaks to the need for vocational students to access the social, political, and economic knowledge surrounding workers' rights leading to industrial and economic democracy.

Toward a Critical Vocational Education

Education for work, the Marxists contend, historically has been linked to the material conditions of capitalist production. School laboratories have mirrored the physical layouts, machinery and tools, and technological innovations of workplaces. Vocational curriculum developers, using occupational analysis techniques, have rationalized duties and tasks into sets of skill competencies for mastery of a variety of jobs. Occupational analysis is firmly lodged in the social efficiency tradition that le· timizes labor market practices and the resulting technocratic imperatives of industry (Kleibard 1987; Wirth 1980). As a consequence students preparing for work remain mystified by looming structural issues of political economy that affect their subjectivities and positions in the social order. In other words, "the difficulty in appropriating occupational analysis as a way of thinking about work and using skill requirements as a way of thinking about the curriculum," one critic of vocational education offers, "is the absence of a larger social and educational vision" (Dippo 1988, p. 193).

The Deweyans and Freireans want a critical vocational education, one that gives students a hopeful message for pragmatic, progressive reconstructions through personal and sociocultural transformations. For example, Gaskell (1995) asked educators to recognize the gendered, racialized, and class-based constructions of vocational curricula that maintain and reproduce dual labor markets that disempower and marginalize females through low-status occupations defined as "women's work." However, rather than capitulate to the logic of capitalism, she claimed, schools could become sites of democratic struggle. "Vocational teachers need not reflect uncritically the taken-for-granted gender inequality that is built into the relations of work," Gaskell added; "A feminist vocational curriculum is part of a strategy to recognize and value the contributions women make to the work of society" (p. 73).

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Gaskell suggested that her Freirean approach is derived from the progressive roots of vocational education articulated by Dewey (1916) who envisioned an emancipatory work education when he wrote: "There is already an opportunity for an education

which, keeping in mind the larger features of work, will reconcile liberal nurture with training for social serviceableness, with ability to share efficiently and happily in occupations which are productive. And such an education will of itself tend to do away with the evils of the existing economic situation" (p. 260). Dewey believed that an integrated academic and vocational curriculum was the best way to teach children how to grow into citizens with the tools to participate fully in industrial policy and economic decision making. Yet he also knew that modern schooling had its limitations; children were not integrated into the economic and social life of industry. In the decades to follow a vast array of educational practitioners attempted to embody the Deweyan ideal of work education ("learning by doing"), but they never fully captured the social origins of his ambitious experimental philosophy. Few followers of Dewey, according to Westbrook (1992) ever paid significant attention to "the radical commitment to industrial democracy that peeked out between the lines of ***The School and Society*** and found everyday expression in the life of the Dewey School" (p. 403). Still, to his credit, Dewey never fully anticipated advanced capitalistic policies and the postindustrial landscape.

Through corporate downsizing and reengineering practices, business outsourcing and offshoring, and employer strikebreaking and union-busting, the voice of organized labor these days has weakened considerably. Marxists warrant that capital's exploitation of labor in the postindustrial era has fragmented and fractured the working class in a calculated strategy to maintain ruling elite interests. Joblessness and underemployment have been created in part by an oligarchy of corporate decision-makers who are responsible for altering market arrangements under advanced capitalism (Brecher and Costello 1994; Rifkin 1995; Sklar 1995). In other words, the domestic economy has been transformed by transnationalism, the globalization of markets, and the managerial shifting of capital to reallocate profits in low-wage areas creating a U.S. work force that is significantly reduced (downsized and streamlined), unstable (lacking in job security), and dislocated (migrating to Sun Belt regions or offshoring in Third World countries). The long-standing social contract between labor and capital has been ruptured, the Marxists charge, which results in the purposeful abandonment of the working classes. Now asked to perform multiple tasks in the leaner, meaner firm, as unwilling pawns in corporate supervisory practices increasingly used to control and discipline labor, with limited occupational mobility today, many low-waged employees are resigned to stay put even in

unsatisfactory, deplorable conditions just for the security of weekly paychecks and accompanying health and retirement benefits.

The Deweyans as a group might agree that integrated academic and vocational studies can sensitize students to labor injustices and shop-floor inequities. Yet few of these school-based reformers would look for openings in which the Freirean revolutionary praxis emerging within occupational studies was linked to social movement activism and labor militancies. Wirth (1983, 1991, 1992), a modern-day Deweyan and proponent of integrated curricula, has written at length about the possibilities for a democratic transformation of industry and schools through socio-technical designs and accompanying quality of worklife transformations. The quality of worklife programs initiated in recent decades, he suggested, have helped democratize supervisory practices and open up firms toward a more cooperative ethic. Yet he is cautiously guarded that corporations alone will be led toward more enlightened practices stemming from a mystical conversion of the soul—a"sudden benevolence" or "faith in democratic values" (1992, p. 5). Capitalism with a heart? Corporate policymakers are led by financial advice, Wirth (1992) offered, "hardheaded conclusions that it is essential for competitive survival and profit" (p. 5).

Marxist critics suggest that democratic practices in firms can be viewed as meretricious approaches at maintaining supervisory control by co-opting workers into believing they are equal partner with management in labor relations (Lakes 1994b). Ironically, rather than empowering workers to understand their rights, enhance the grievance process, or build solidarity among the rank and file, quality of worklife practices can sabotage workers' organizing activities and militancies. Still, the Deweyans welcome progressive changes in employment settings, particularly in high performance firms that use people who can think by exhibiting abstractions, systems viewpoints, experimental inquiry, and collaborative learning styles derived from Reich's (1991) classificatory system of postindustrial jobs.

One problem with the assumption of postindustrial employability is that no one can accurately predict what employment scenarios will appear in the future. Even Grubb (1996) cautioned that certain aspects of the new vocationalism based on futurist predictions of labor force participation rates are uncertain at this time. Advocates of school reform may be influenced by heightened business imperatives, he feared, rather than time-tested and sound

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educational practices. Some complain there will not be sufficient jobs for students when they graduate from schools (Boutwell 1994; Osterman 1988). Still others charge that the political economy continues to reproduce individuals through schooling for low-waged, low-skilled futures (Burke and Rumberger 1987; Rumberger 1981). This is aided by the hidden curriculum of tracking (see Oakes 1985). Although the rhetoric of business and corporate leaders suggests that technological developments in the information age have created plenty of meaningful jobs in postindustrial settings, perhaps labor markets still operate under the basic logic of capitalist accumulation (Wood 1996).

The new vocationalism may offer false promises of employability when in reality the opportunities for good work are diminishing. Yet we need further quantitative and qualitative research in this area—empirical studies that examine student placements and daily occurrences in high performance worksites.

Minority students in transition from school to work, for example, do not face future employment prospects in monolithic patterns (Lafer 1992, 1994). Structural inequalities in job distribution—and unequal occupational rewards—militate against low-income young people in their search process (Borman 1991; Lakes and Borman 1994). Labor markets marginalize by class, race, and gender a reserve army of workers destined for the least desirable jobs. Some individuals may never accommodate to the work culture and organizational rules necessary for perceived labor market success. Due to their historic struggle against oppression and discrimination in this society, minorities such as Hispanic Americans or African Americans often are unable to accept the dominant view of social mobility—one that links educational credentials with the finding and keeping of a good job (Knouse, Rosenfeld, and Culbertson 1992; Ogbu 1986).

Hull's (1992, 1993b) study of a group of African-American females enrolled in a postsecondary vocational program in banking and finance showed that, because of high labor turnover in this low-paying industry, employers cared less for vocational skill development and more about acculturating new workers (mostly women of color) to behavioral repertoires of docility and passivity. The students were trained on 10-key calculating machines as proof-operators: individuals who process debit and credit slips into a large proof-operation machine and key in the amounts of those slips on their calculating machines. The major focus of this program,

however, was the "socialization and confidence-building" (1992, p. 59) aspects of vocational preparation. The apparent lack of skills did not hinder these students in obtaining entry-level, hourly jobs in proof-operations—retention and dismissal was another matter altogether. What this study implies is that marketplace imperatives indeed dictate one's success or failure in the world of work, not necessarily advanced levels of technical preparation (Grubb 1984; Kantor 1994; Levine 1994; and Pincus 1980). Still, we need more research that details work cultures and skill requirements in post-industrial settings (see Gowen 1992, 1994; Hart 1993; Hull 1993a, 1997; and Kazemek 1991).

Given the criticisms just outlined, Deweyan advocates of the new vocationalism evidently are quite content simply to change the business-as-usual practices of school-based educators, particularly by enriching vocational program offerings through curriculum integration. These exponents are dedicated to moving students away from narrower conceptions of job training toward broader choices and flexible options related to sound career planning for successful occupational futures.

Today's postindustrial workplaces, the Freireans argue, encourage learning to learn as necessary in the production function. "The workplace should be an extension of a cooperative, research-based school experience," Kincheloe (1995) proposed, in reference to what he termed "post-formal workplaces" (pp. 237-238). In his words, "post-formal workers are not simply individuals who are filled with useful data; they are men and women who see themselves as thinkers (conceptualizers) and doers (executors). The identification and solution of problems becomes a way of life, an everyday activity." Yet Kincheloe also advocated that learners receive a critical viewpoint about work, teaching them the "faults and contradictions" in society and culture. Thus, Freirean pedagogues would expose the production of information and perpetuation of myths associated with hegemonic politics and antilabor practices. "Recognition of such patterns and the insidious working of power can help build a sense of solidarity among work education students," Kincheloe (1995) wrote, "a commitment to collective action that challenges arrangements of privilege" (p. 5). Students must be made aware of reigning postindustrial policies, he charged, ones that strengthen corporate power but further class divisions and human suffering through the redistribution of wealth.

A critical education creates new meanings for learners through participatory actions and renewed conversations. What the Freireans promote is a cultural politics in which collectively to challenge and act upon the origins of one's marginalizations in the social order. For instance, Kincheloe (1995) asks students to recognize how the purchase price of each Perdue chicken is related to deskilled and accelerated shop-floor conditions, where low-waged, piecework laborers perform repetitive motion tasks that heighten their chances of getting carpal-tunnel syndrome as well as increase their likelihood of accidental injury at work. "Public access to such information," he argued, "can discipline the destructive tendencies of business and industry" (p. 57). As a result, political knowledge emerges in communities of learners, shaping critical literacies through social activity that illuminates a reality quite different from official versions of "the truth" (see Apple 1993, 1996).

Why should high school teachers eagerly embrace this form of instruction? Asche (1993, pp. 25-26) suggested that "vocational educators want to serve the honorable private interests of students" by turning them into competent workers—nothing more. Although these teachers "may unwittingly carry out the instrumental purposes" of social reproductionists, he continued, critical pedagogy is very threatening to pedagogues who are wedded to competency-based, behavioristic, and technocratic approaches. Secondary education may not be the most appropriate place for critical pedagogy, especially since there are dwindling student numbers in vocational tracks these days. Research studies of current enrollment distributions in high school tracks reveal the disturbing pattern that vocational education is a viable option for only a small minority of students—fewer than 10 percent (Gray 1990; Gray, Wang, and Malizia 1995).

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A decline of vocational enrollments was indicated early in the 1980s as the college-prep track swelled in numbers of students. By 1990 the figures show about two of three high schoolers elected the curriculum in that track. Obviously, increased graduation requirements in many states have benefitted those students who elect academic credits. The heightened clamoring for higher education in the last 2 decades has helped fuel a climate of distaste for subject matter tainted by occupational skills and job readiness. Still, many students are affected by vocational education offerings. They may not be program completers per se but are likely to take at least one vocational course in their studies (Roegge and Flesher 1995). Additionally, with the advent of tech prep offerings in high schools,

college track students can begin to ease into career development during their transition to 2-year postsecondary technical schools. Even within classrooms that serve lower-track students there are places that replace dull and listless low-status knowledge with exciting and innovative lessons (Page 1991).

Nonetheless, researchers might consider shifting their focus to postsecondary venues where there may be more opportunities for examining instances of critical education and student activism. At the DeVry Technical Institute in Chicago, for example, one developmental English class of vocational students formed a political group termed the New Information Proletariat (NIP) party and issued a manifesto subsequently published in the pages of ***cy.Rev: A Journal of Cybernetic Revolution, Sustainable Socialism & Radical Democracy*** (Galang et al. 1995). The DeVry students articulated several important democratic alternatives to current authoritarian trends in postindustrial organization: They suggested that patent laws be redesigned so that computer programmers get credit for their software inventions without restricting the free flow of information necessary for further research and development, and they proposed that the awarding of patents be limited to 1 year, after which the owner's idea will circulate in the public domain unfettered by pecuniary forces. Additionally, the safeguarding of confidential documents on computers is coming under increased scrutiny by public legislators who fear tapping into and hacking of military-industrial databases. In fact, there is recent talk of an encryption method that the government can use to stop this sort of criminal activity, yet they can also decrypt and monitor digitized information at will. Fearing the potential assault on civil liberties if governmental regulation intervenes, the DeVry students questioned the notion of a "Big Brother" federal interference in this arena. And, in an effort to upgrade the laboring conditions of cyberwork, the vocational students suggested that temporary and contingency workers in the new information industries needed to enter collective bargaining agreements with temp agencies and employers, so that employees are compensated for the quality and quantity of their intellectual involvement at work as well as time spent in formal preparation for knowledge work. Researchers might find the kinds of college classrooms just mentioned more appealing and accessible for investigations into Freirean pedagogy (see Shor 1987, 1988).

Finally, proponents of the new vocationalism—of whatever stripe—must recognize that current school-based reform efforts are a curriculum settlement emerging in the last decades of this century as an answer to pressures by conservative political and fundamentalist religious forces (Apple 1996; Carlson 1997). Public educators are under intense scrutiny, assaulted by a myriad of authoritarian measures for the schools. Elite interests want to maintain order and discipline in society, especially as it pertains to parental rights and control over children. Their conservative restoration promises to end license and laxity in public schooling, now unchecked by the supposed reigning ideologies of feminism, humanism, liberalism, multiculturalism, secularism, socialism, and unionism, to name a few.

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The new vocationalism might offer endless possibilities for learning and living democratically, but only if we are serious about social justice, educational improvement, and the production of good work and smart workers.

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Meanwhile, the future of vocational education is uncertain. Lewis (1991) contends that the field may disappear in its entirety, particularly since vocational educators “have so completely capitulated in the face of perceived threats to their existence” (p. 106). Perhaps not. The new vocationalism is held together by a loose alliance of left-leaning thinkers desiring to keep the ideals of a democratic education alive (Sedunary 1996). The new vocationalism could be an important catalyst in furthering detracking of schools, for instance, clarifying the principles of equity and fairness, tolerance and acceptance. “There are few other curricular and structural innovations that allow this to happen,” noted Grubb (1995d, p. 217). The new vocationalism might offer endless possibilities for learning and living democratically, Kincheloe (1995) implored, but only “if we are serious about social justice, educational improvement, and the production of good work and smart workers” (p. 323). By renewing our faith in public education once again, the new vocationalism might successfully make the transition into the next century.

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